

most desireth. And right thus may I maken semblable resouns of honours, and of glorie, and of delyts. for so as every of these forseide thinges is the same that thise other thinges ben, that is to seyn, al oon thing, whoso that ever seketh to geten that oon of thise, and nat that other, he ne geteth nat that he desireth. **Boece.** What seyst thou thanne, yif that a man coveiteth to geten alle thise thinges togider?

Philosophie.

CERTES, quod she, I wolde seye, that he wolde geten him sovereyn blisfulnesse; but that shal he nat finde in tho thinges that I have shewed, that ne mowen nat yeven that they beheben. **Certes**, no, quod I.

THANNE, quod she, ne sholden men nat by no wey seken blisfulnesse in swiche thinges as men wene that they ne mowen yeven but o thing senglely of alle that men seken. **I** graunte wel, quod I; ne no sother thing ne may ben sayd.

Wast thou thanne, quod she, the forme and the causes of false welefulnesse. Now tome and flitte the eyen of thy thought; for ther shalt thou sen anon thilke verray blisfulnesse that I have bihight thee. **Certes**, quod I, it is cleer and open, thogh it were to a blinde man; and that shewedest thou me ful wel a litel herbyform, whan thou enforcedest thee to shewe me the causes of the false blisfulnesse. for but yif I be bigyled, thanne is thilke the verray blisfulnesse parfit, that parfitly maketh a man suffisaunt, mighty, honourable, noble, and ful of gladnesse. And, for thou shalt wel knowe that I have wel understonden thise thinges within my herte, I knowe wel that thilke blisfulnesse, that may verrayly yeven oon of the forseide thinges, sin they ben al oon, I knowe, douteles, that thilke thing is the fulle blisfulnesse.

Philosophie.

MY norie, quod she, by this opinion I seye that thou art blisful, yif thou putte this therto that I shal seyn. **What** is that? quod I.

WHAT is that? quod I. **THOU** art thou that ther be any thing in thise erthely mortal toun/bling thinges that may bringen this estat? **Certes**, quod I, I trowe it naught; and thou hast shewed me wel that over thilke good ther nis nothing more to ben desired.

THISE thinges thanne, quod she, that is to sey, erthely suffisaunce & power & swiche thinges, either they semen lykenesses of verray good, or elles it semeth that they yeve to mortal folk a maner of goodes that ne ben nat parfit; but thilke good that is verray and parfit, that may

they nat yeven. **I** acorde me wel, quod I. **THANNE**, quod she, for as moche as thou hast knowen which is thilke verray blisfulnesse, and eek which thilke thinges ben that lyen falsly blisfulnesse, that is to seyn, that by deceite semen verray goodes, now behoveth thee to knowe whennes and where thou mowest thilke verray blisfulnesse. **Certes**, quod I, that desire I greetly, and have abiden longe tyme to herkennen it.

Wast thou thanne, quod she, as it lyketh to my disciple Plato, in his book of In Timoeo, that in right litel God, what jigest thou that benow to do, so that we may deserve to finde the set of thilke verray good? **Certes**, quod I, I deme that we shollen clepen the fader of alle goodes; for withouten him nis ther nothing founden aright. **Thou** seyst aright thus:

Metre IX.

O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas.

THOU fader, creator of hevene and of erthes, that governest this world by perdurableresoun, that comandeest the tymes to gon from sin that age hadde beginninge; thou that dwellest thyself aystode fast and stable, & yvest alle othere thinges to ben mooved; ne foreine causes necesseden thee never to compounne werk of flotinge matere, but only the forme of sovereyn good yset within thee withoute envye, that moevede thee freely. Thou that art alderfayrest, beringe the faire world in thy thought, formedest this world to the lykenesse semblable of that faire world in thy thought. Thou drawest al thing of thy sovereyn ensampler, & comandeest that this world, parfitliche ymaked, have freely & absolut his parfit parties. Thou bindest the elements by noumbres proporecionables, that the colde thinges mowen accorden with the hote thinges, and the drye thinges with the moiste thinges; that the fyr, that is purest, ne flee nat over hye, ne that the hevynesse ne drawe nat adoun overlowe the erthes that ben plounged in the wateres. Thou knittest togider the mene sowle of treble kinde, moevinge alle thinges, and devydest it by membres acordinge; & whan it is thus devyded, it hath assembled a moevinge into two roundes; it goth to tome ayein to himself, and envyrouneth a ful deep thought, and torneth the hevene by semblable image. Thou by evene lyke causes enhansest the sowles of the lasse lyves, and, ablinge hem heye by

lighte cartes, thou sowest hem into hevene and into erthe; & whan they ben converted to thee by thy benigne lawe, thou makest hem retorne ayein to thee by ayein ledinge fyr.

FADER, yive thou to the thought to styen up into thy streite sete, and graunte him to envyroune the welle of good; and, the lighte yfounde, graunte him to fichen the clere sightes of his corage in thee. And scatter thou and to breke thou the weightes & the cloudes of erthely hevynesse, and shyne thou by thy brightnesse. For thou art cleernesse; thou art peysible reste to debonaire folk; thou thyself art biginninge, berer, leder, path, & terme; to loke on thee, that is our ende.

Prose X.

Quoniam igitur quae sit imperfecti.

Wast thou thanne, quod she, as thou hast seyn, which is the forme of good that nis nat parfit, & which is the forme of good that is parfit, now trowe I that it were good to shewe in what this perfeccioun of blisfulnesse is set. And in this thing, I trowe that we sholden first enquire for to witen, yif that any swiche maner good as thilke good that thou hast diffinisshed a litel heerbyform, that is to seyn, sovereyn good, may ben founden in the nature of thinges; for that weyn imaginacioun of thought ne deceyve us nat, and putte us out of the sothfastnesse of thilke thing that is submitted unto us. But it may nat ben denyed that thilke good ne is, and that it nis right as welle of alle goodes. for al thing that is cleped inparfit is proeved inparfit by the amenusinge of perfeccioun or of thing that is parfit. And therof comthit, that in every thing general, yif that men sen anything that is inparfit, certes, in thilke general ther mot ben somthing that is parfit; for yif so be that perfeccioun is don away, men may nat thinkenesey fro whennes thilke thing is that is cleped inparfit. For the nature of thinges ne took nat hir beginninge of thinges amenused and inparfit, but it proceedeth of thinges that ben al hoole & absolut, and descendeth so doun into outterest thinges, and into thinges empty and withouten frut. But, as I have yshewed a litel herbyform, that yif ther be a blisfulnesse that be freele and weyn and inparfit, ther may no man doute that ther nis som blisfulnesse that is sad, stedefast, and parfit. **Boece.** This is concluded, quod I, firmly and sothfastly.

Philosophie.

Wast thou thanne, quod she, in wham this blisfulnesse enhabiteth. The comune acordaunce and conceite of the corages of men proeveth & graunteth, that God, prince of alle thinges, is good. for, so as nothing ne may ben thought bettre than God, it may nat ben doubted thanne that he, that nothing nis bettre, that he nis good. Certes, resoun sheweth that God is so good, that it proveth by verray force that parfit good is in him. for yif God ne is swich, he ne may nat ben prince of alle thinges; for certes somthing possessing in itself parfit good, sholde ben more worthy than God, and it sholde semen that thilke thing were first, & elder than God. for we han shewed apertly that alle thinges that ben parfit ben first or thinges that ben unparfit; and forthy, for as moche as that my resoun or my proces ne go nat away withoute an ende, we owen to graunten that the sovereyn God is right ful of sovereyn parfit good. And we han establissed that the sovereyn good is verray blisfulnesse: thanne mot it nedes be, that verray blisfulnesse is set in sovereyn God. **This** take I wel, quod I, ne this ne may nat ben withseid in no manere.

Wast thou mayst proeven, holly & withoute corrupcioun, this that I have seyd, that the sovereyn God is right ful of sovereyn good. **In** which manere? quod I.

WHAT is that? quod she, that this prince of alle thinges have ytake thilke sovereyn good anywher out of himself, of which sovereyn good men proveth that he is ful, right as thou mightest thinken that God, that hath blisfulnesse in himself, and thilke blisfulnesse that is in him, weren dyvers in substance? for yif thou wene that God have received thilke good out of himself, thou mayst wene that he that yaf thilke good to God be more worthy than is God. But I am biknowen and confesse, and that right dignely, that God is right worthy aboven alle thinges; and, yif so be that this good be in him by nature, but that it is dyvers fro him by weninge resoun, sin we speke of God prince of alle thinges: feigne who? so feigne may, who was he that hath conjoined thise dyverse thinges togider? And eek, at the laste, see wel that a thing that is dyvers from any thing, that thilke thing nis nat that same thing fro which it is understonden to ben dyvers. Thanne folweth it, that thilke thing that by his nature is dyvers fro sovereyn good, that that thing nis nat sovereyn good; but certes, that were a felonous corsednesse to thinken that of him that nothing nis more worth.